

new leadership, we want to do everything we can to allow them to grow within their own boundaries, make their own decisions and develop their own vision.

The bill includes funding for numerous important independent agencies. Some, such as the General Services Administration and the Office of Personnel Management, support all government agencies in their day-to-day operations. Other agencies are smaller but equally vital. For example, the Election Assistance Commission deals with issues that are extraordinarily important to the Nation and its ability to have reliable, secure and accessible elections. This bill includes, Mr. Chairman, \$300 million for payments to States to help them meet the requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

The bill also includes money for essential regulatory agencies, namely the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Federal Communications Commission. We have provided a total of \$78 million in increases over 2007 for these agencies. We are recommending funding to ensure that they have the ability to oversee, investigate, and take necessary actions relating to their respective missions. For example, the Federal Trade Commission would receive \$36 million above this year's level and \$7 million above the request to enhance consumer protection activi-

ties, including investigations of subprime lending and identity theft and to keep the marketplace free from anticompetitive business practices.

Another important agency in this bill is the Small Business Administration. The bill includes \$582 million for the SBA, including \$100 million for Small Business Development Centers, which is \$12 million above the current year. The bill also funds a 7(a) loan guarantee program by providing an \$80 million subsidy to make loans more affordable for small businesses.

We also include \$17 million for a Microloan program, including \$2.5 million for the subsidy cost of these loans, as well as funding for SBA programs that target businesses in disadvantaged or low-income communities. These include the HUBZone program, the PRIME program and the 7(j) program, which provides assistance relating to accounting practices or bidding on Federal contracts.

This bill also has numerous general provisions that apply to funds in the Act or governmentwide. The mark includes some changes in these provisions from previous bills. It includes, for example, some changes to the provision on public-private competitions, known to some as A-76, or outsourcing, that will strengthen protections for Federal employees.

Mr. Chairman, this bill will not make everyone happy. It is not even doing all that I want it to do. We have had to make compromises in order to ensure

that this bill will make it through the process and to the President's desk. However, the bill is a good step towards making some important changes to funding and policies. I encourage everyone to recognize that this bill is part of a process that will take time to complete. We will not be able to do everything in our first year.

Mr. Chairman, I would like at this time to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. REGULA, for his work and collaboration. We may not always agree on everything in this bill, but we worked together where we could to develop the best possible bill. I truly appreciate his leadership and support.

I also want to express my appreciation and thanks for the dedication and hard work of our subcommittee staff, both the majority and minority, especially today when they will be here past 1, 2 o'clock in the morning.

Dale Oak, Bob Bonner, Karyn Kendall, Frank Carillo, Deb Bilek, and Jim Curry with the majority staff; John Martens and Alice Hogans with the minority staff; and Rick Limardo with Congressman REGULA's personal staff have devoted countless hours. That is why this bill is before you today. I would like to recognize their many contributions. I would like also like to acknowledge and thank my personal staff under the leadership of Nadine Berg.

Mr. Chairman, I urge support for this bill.